

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TAIPEI 02986 01 OF 02 121047Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00
DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-01 ICA-11 /062 W
-----080745 121058Z /10

P 121024Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7414
INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 02986

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, US, CH, TW
SUBJECT: TAIPEI REACTION REPORT

REF: TAIPEI 2813

1. SUMMARY: ATMOSPHERE OF APPREHENSION PRECIPITATED BY BRZEZINSKI'S TRIP HAS BEEN INTENSIFIED BY REACTION TO OUR MAY 5 ANNOUNCEMENT OF IMPENDING ICA CLOSURES. MOST POLITICALLY INFORMED PEOPLE IN TAIWAN SEEM TO KNOW OF CLOSINGS AND READ THEM RATHER MATTER-OF-FACTLY AS SIGN THAT NORMALIZATION IS MOVING AHEAD. GROG REACTION, AFTER FEW DAYS OF SILENCE, HAS BEEN ONE OF SURPRISE AND WHAT WE TAKE TO BE FEIGNED SHOCK THAT U.S. WOULD EMASCULATE CULTURAL RELATIONSHIP WHICH THE GROG HAD BEEN LED TO BELIEVE WOULD SURVIVE NORMALIZATION. MOFA HAS ALREADY PUSHED THIS LINE IN THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE CHINA NEWS, BUT HAS SO FAR KEPT IT OUT OF THE VERNACULAR PRESS. THEY MAY LATER DECIDE TO OPEN THE ISSUE IN THE CHINESE PRESS, BUT THE PRIMARY TARGET IS THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY HERE, THE EMBASSY, THE DEPARTMENT AND, THROUGH GIO HANDOUTS, CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 TAIPEI 02986 01 OF 02 121047Z

THE U.S. PUBLIC AND CONGRESS. THE MESSAGE IS THAT THE U.S. IS SO CRAVEN IT WILL EVEN BURN ITS OWN LIBRARIES TO APPEASE THE COMMUNISTS. THE GROG HAS ALSO HINTED IN PRIVATE THAT IT IS THINKING OF EXPLOITING THE LINE THAT THE ICA CLOSURES, IN FACE OF U.S. ASSURANCES ABOUT THE CONTINUITY OF PRACTICAL TIES, "PROVES" THE GROG POSITION THAT NORMALIZATION MEANS

"ABANDONMENT".

2. GROC INSTRUCTED PRESS TO PLAY STORY ON ICA TAICHUNG AND TAINAN CLOSINGS WITHOUT COMMENT. THIS LED TO INITIAL LIGHT COVERAGE. ONLY TWO REPORTERS CONTACTED EMBASSY SPOKESMAN DAY OF RELEASE FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION. BOTH CHOSE NOT TO PRINT STATEMENT THAT "ALL FACTORS WERE CONSIDERED" IN DECISION. ON MAY 8 ENGLISH-LANGUAGE CHINA NEWS REPORTER INTERVIEWED SPOKESMAN AT SOME LENGTH. CN EDITOR PERSONALLY WROTE STORY ON BASIS REPORTER'S NOTES WHICH CLAIMED CLOSURES POLITICAL ACT WHICH "HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH NORMALIZATION".

3. CHINA NEWS MAY 8 STORY ON CLOSURES TRIGGERED NUMEROUS QUERIES BY OTHER REPORTERS SEEKING VERIFICATION. ALTHOUGH PRESSURED, SPOKESMAN REFUSED TO GO BEYOND OR INTERPRET "ALL FACTORS CONSIDERED" STATEMENT, BUT DID POINT OUT THAT CUT MAINLY BUDGETARY AND THAT ICA PROGRAMMING WOULD CONTINUE IN TAICHUNG AND TAINAN DIRECTED FROM TAIPEI. ALTHOUGH QUERIED AT LENGTH BY SEVERAL REPORTERS, NO CHINESE PAPER HAS TO DATE REPORTED CHINA NEWS SPECULATION ON POLITICAL ANGLE, INDICATING THAT BAN ON VERNACULAR DISCUSSION OF THE ISSUE CONTINUES.

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PAGE 03 TAIPEI 02986 01 OF 02 121047Z

4. MOFA REACTION (EXPRESSED ON INSTRUCTIONS OF VICE MINISTER CH'EN BY NORTH AMERICAN AFFAIRS FIRST SECTION CHIEF TO ACTING POLITICAL COUNSELOR) WAS FIRST TO SEEK CONFIRMATION THAT "ALL FACTORS HAD BEEN CONSIDERED" IN REACHING DECISION TO CLOSE BRANCH POSTS, AND THEN, HAVING RECEIVED THAT, TO EXPRESS SURPRISE AND SHOCK THAT WE WERE CLOSING CULTURAL FACILITIES WHEN THE GROC HAD BEEN LED TO BELIEVE THAT CULTURAL RELATIONS WOULD SURVIVE NORMALIZATION. FIRST SECTION CHIEF WONDERED RHETORICALLY IF SIMILAR CUTS IN "ECONOMIC RELATIONS" WOULD BE MADE IN THE COURSE OF NORMALIZATION.

5. MOFA OFFICIAL SUBSEQUENTLY BRIEFED SEVERAL REPORTERS ON CONVERSATION WITH EMBASSY OFFICER. RESULT WAS THAT CHINA NEWS REPORTER WROTE SECOND STORY FOR MAY 11 CHINA NEWS, THIS ONE HEADLINED "LIBRARY CLOSURES BASED ON MANDATE FROM D.C. SAYS AMERICAN EMBASSY". ITEM QUOTED "RANKING U.S. EMBASSY OFFICIAL...WHO DECLINED TO BE IDENTIFIED" AS CONFIRMING LOCAL SPECULATION THAT CLOSURES WERE POLITICAL AND NOT PROMPTED BY BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS. INCREDIBLY,

MOFA OFFICIAL WAS SOURCE OF THIS DISTORED ACCOUNT. HE NOT ONLY TOLD THE PRESS OF HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH EMBASSY (WHICH WAS UNPROFESSIONAL) BUT THEN ADMITTED TO US HE HAD DONE SO (WHICH WE SUSPECT WAS MACHIAVELLIAN). ASSUME THE MOTIVE WAS TO PROVOKE US INTO MAKING SOME PUBLIC STATEMENT THE GROC COULD USE. WE HAVE NOT BEEN PROVOKED.

6. INDEPENDENTS ARE STILL WATCHING FROM THE SIDELINES. PROMINENT NON-KMT POLITICIAN WHO HAPPENED TO BE IN CENTRAL TAIWAN WHEN CLOSINGS ANNOUNCED TOLD EMBASSY

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PAGE 01 TAIPEI 02986 02 OF 02 121048Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 TAIPEI 02986

OFFICER THAT NEWS OF THE CLOSING WAS WIDESPREAD. GENERAL FEELING, WHICH HE SHARED, WAS THAT IT WAS UNFORTUNATE THESE FACILITIES WOULD BE DENIED TO LOCAL RESIDENTS. HE DID NOT, HOWEVER, CRITICIZE THE ACTION OR GIVE ANY INDICATION TAIWANESE WOULD RESPOND TO GROC CHARGE THAT CLOSINGS "PROVE" THAT NORMALIZATION MEANS ABANDONMENT. SULLIVAN

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